

COACH'S ORGANIZATION AND TRAVEL BAG

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application
5 60/440,946, filed January 17, 2003, the entire contents of which are
hereby incorporated by reference herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to baggage. More particularly, this
10 invention relates to a bag for storing and organizing articles used by
coaches of sports teams.

BACKGROUND

Coaches and staff of sports teams must carry various articles to
and from practice sessions, business and administrative meetings and
15 games. Such items may, for example, include business and
administrative paperwork and files, a rule book, equipment, coaching
boards, markers and pens, a cellular telephone, water bottles, hardware,
tools and medical supplies. Known prior art includes various luggage and
bags, none of which includes a plurality of compartments designed for
20 suitably accommodating such a wide range of articles in a convenient and
orderly manner.

Most known bags and luggage consist of little more than a flexible bag or body defining a box-shaped compartment with a zippered opening and one or more shoulder straps. These devices offer minimal organizational capability, little or no flexibility (i.e., reconfigurability) and limited access to the contents of the bag.

While various articles may be stored in a compartment of a large bag, such disorganized storage is conducive to oversight, loss and damage during packing, storage and transportation. The first article placed in the compartment falls to the bottom. Contents are prone to shifting and collision during transportation, increasing the risk of damage and making access difficult. When an article is eventually needed, it may be difficult to find (or impossible to find if it was overlooked during packing), or it may be damaged and rendered unusable.

Another deficiency of prior art luggage and bags is that they are not readily configurable to accommodate various modes of use. Most such devices provide a determined number of pockets and compartments. While the pockets and compartments may be expandable, and one or a few dividers may be supplied, the prior art typically does not allow configuration of the compartments to accommodate different modes of use. For example, a coach may desire one configuration for use while coaching, another configuration for games and yet another configuration

for instruction and training. With conventional luggage and bags, a user is typically relegated to using the standard configuration for all purposes.

Furthermore, prior art luggage and bags typically do not provide
5 connection means for releasably attaching equipment, supplies and the like (e.g., a hockey stick or baseball bat, a water bottle basket or ball bag) to the exterior of the bag.

Moreover, conventional bags typically come with a fixed hard bottom or a soft pliable bottom. A bag that offers the sturdiness of a hard
10 bottom with the collapsibility and ease of storage of a soft bottom would be preferred.

What is needed is a bag that provides a plurality of compartments designed for accommodating a wide range of articles in a convenient and orderly manner. Preferably, the bag is configurable to accommodate
15 various modes of use. Additionally, the bag should preferably include means for releasably attaching equipment, supplies and other articles to the exterior of the bag. Furthermore, the bag should be user friendly, easy to carry and store a plurality of small, medium and large articles in a safe, convenient, and efficient manner. Moreover, the bag should preferably
20 include a removable hard bottom.

SUMMARY

It is therefore an object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a bag that includes a plurality of compartments
5 designed for accommodating a wide range of articles in a convenient and orderly manner.

It is another object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a bag that allows a compartment to be reconfigured to accommodate various modes of use.

10 It is a further object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a bag that includes exterior releasable connection means for releasably attaching articles to the bag.

It is yet another object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a bag that includes means to facilitate carrying and
15 transportation.

It is still another object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a bag that includes a removable hard bottom.

To achieve these and other objects, an organization and travel bag in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the present invention
20 includes a core storage area, a storage area for storing a plurality of relatively small articles such as medical supplies and a business storage area, a plurality of pockets and holders within the medical storage area for

storing medical supplies, a plurality of compartments in the business storage area for accommodating file folders and administrative articles, a compartment for storing coaching boards, and a plurality of optional
5 removable and reconfigurable inserts for defining compartments within the core storage to accommodate a wide range of articles. A pocket at the bottom for receiving a removable hard bottom insert.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the following description, appended claims, and accompanying drawings, where:

Figure 1 is a first perspective view conceptually depicting an
15 exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct storage areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a second perspective view conceptually depicting an exemplary bag having straps for securing sporting equipment in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention;

20 Figure 3 is a top plan view conceptually depicting a main interior compartment of an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct storage

areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a side cutaway view conceptually depicting the interior
5 of a main compartment of an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct storage areas and inserts in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a cutaway view conceptually depicting the interior of a
side compartment of an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct
10 storage areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention;

Figure 6 is a cutaway view conceptually depicting the interior of a
side compartment of an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct
storage areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the
15 present invention; and

Figure 7 is a bottom plan view of an exemplary bag with feet in
accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

20 Referring to Figure 1, a perspective view conceptually depicting an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct storage areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention is shown. The

exemplary bag includes a front side 118, left side 132, right side 138 and a back side 202 (as shown in Figure 2). A plurality of zippers 324, 124, 130, 134 and 204 (as shown in Figure 2) provide access to a plurality of interior compartments. In a preferred embodiment, nylon coil, enamel coated #8 zippers having dual pull tabs are used to facilitate opening and closing, and to enable locking using a luggage padlock in a conventional manner. The exemplary bag is approximately 26 inches x 16 inches x 14 inches.

The bag includes several carrying items. A pair of releasably joinable handles 112 and 114 with a releasable handle grip 116 is provided for carrying the bag. The flexibility and size of the handles and the attachment locations preferably allow the cross-members of both handles to be brought together in a conventional manner and grasped by one hand. The handle grip allows releasably wrapping the cross members to facilitate gripping and carrying. The handle grip may be comprised of a flexible fabric or leather and include snaps or hook and loop releasable fasteners. An adjustable shoulder strap 102 with a molded shoulder pad 152, swivel snaphooks 104 and 106, and D-ring attachments 108 and 110. Additionally, a pair of adjustable straps 142 and 144 are provided for carrying an elongate object such as a hockey stick, baseball bat (as conceptually shown in Figure 2) or a lacrosse stick.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that permanently attached or releasably attached handles and/or straps may be utilized without departing from the scope of the present invention. Additionally, releasable attachment means other than snap hooks, clips and D-rings may be utilized without departing from the scope of the present invention. Moreover, the configuration, arrangement, number and placement of attachment points, handles and straps may be varied without departing from the scope of the present invention.

Referring to Figure 3, a top sectional plan view conceptually depicting an exemplary bag having a plurality of distinct storage areas in accordance with a preferred implementation of the present invention is shown. The bag includes a medical supply storage area 326 for storing a plurality of relatively small articles, such as medical supplies; a core storage area 317-322 suitable for storing relatively large articles, such as a water bottles and equipment; a coaching board area 324 suitable for storing clipboards, chalk boards, white boards, pads and the like; a business folder area 312 and 314 for storing file folders, documentation, and business and administrative supplies; a business supply storage area 310 to organize and store business supplies; and preferably one or more end pockets 316 and 328 for miscellaneous items. Each area may have a plurality of compartments, pockets and dividers. Those skilled in the art

will understand, that the medical supply storage area 326, core storage area 324-130, business folder area 312 and 314, business supply area 310 and end pockets 316 and 318 may be manufactured separately and then attached together, such as by stitching, to form a single integral bag or manufactured as integral components.

The medical supply storage area 326 is comprised of the back panel 202 of the bag, as shown in Figure 2, and a medical supply panel 620, as shown in Figure 6. The medical supply panel 620 preferably includes a plurality of mesh pockets 610-618 and elastic holders 604-608 as well as a pocket with a flap closure 602. The pockets and elastic holders may be used to store various articles, such as medical supplies, in an orderly accessible manner. The mesh pockets facilitate viewing contents without removal. The pocket with the flap closure 602 preferably includes a releasable attachment means, for example hook and loop fastening means such as Velcro® brand fasteners by Velcro Industries B.V. In a preferred implementation mesh pockets 610-618 are three to four inches wide, mesh pocket 640 is five inches wide and mesh pocket 650 is two inches wide, elastic holders 604-608 are three inches wide and pocket 602 is nine inches wide, though the present invention is not limited to such pocket and holder sizes, configurations or number. Other sizes, configurations and numbers of pockets and holders may be employed

without departing from the scope of the present invention so long as the panel 620 provides means for securing a plurality of relatively small articles in an orderly manner.

5 The panel 620 may be comprised of a non-rigid fabric material (e.g., packcloth or ballistic nylon), foam or rigid cardboard or plastic (e.g., polyethylene) material (flat or corrugated) covered with a thin thread material such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The pockets and holders are attached to the panel by glue, stitching, fasteners, or other attachment
10 means. Preferably, the panel is sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may instead be used.

 In a preferred embodiment, the medical supply storage area 326 is approximately twenty-one inches long, by approximately two inches wide,
15 by approximately twelve to fourteen inches in height. However, the present invention is not limited to that size. Other storage area sizes effective for storing medical supplies and/or similarly sized articles may be used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

 The core storage area 318-322 preferably includes a relatively
20 large rectangular compartment useful for storing bulky articles and a narrow compartment 324 useful for storing coaching boards and the like. The narrow compartment 324 is comprised of the back of the medical

supply panel 620, core area panel 321A, and portions of side panels 318A and 322A. The panels may be comprised of a flexible foam or a rigid cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, and a covering of thin thread material such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The panel 321A may
5 sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners, or partial sewing and releasable attachment may instead be used. Of course, the core storage area also includes a bottom panel. The elongate rectangular
10 compartment 324 is suitable for safely storing coaches boards (i.e., clip boards typically displaying a playing field, court or ice rink) 324A and 324B and similarly sized articles in an orderly manner.

In a preferred embodiment, storage area 324 is approximately twenty-one inches long, by approximately one inch wide, by approximately
15 thirteen to fourteen inches deep. However, the present invention is not limited to that size. Other storage area sizes effective for storing coaches boards and/or similarly sized articles may be used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

Rectangular compartment 318-322 is comprised of core area
20 panels 321A and 323A, and portions of side panels 322A and 318A as well as a bottom panel. Panel 323A may be comprised of a flexible foam or a non-rigid fabric material (e.g., packcloth or ballistic nylon), rigid

cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, with a covering of thin thread material such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. Preferably, the panel is sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may instead be used. The large rectangular compartment 318-322 is suitable for safely storing relatively large articles (e.g., hockey skates, water bottles and similarly sized articles) in an orderly manner.

Releasable attachment means, such as hook and loop fasteners, are preferably provided along panels 321A and 323A. For example, each panel 321A and 323A may include two strips of hook and loop fasteners. By way of example, referring to Figure 4, a strip 402 and 404 attached in parallel to panel 321A, and another pair of strips (not shown) are attached in parallel to panel 323A. The strips releasably secure inserts, such as inserts 148 and 150 as shown in Figure 3, which comprise divider panels extending from panel 321A to panel 323A thereby dividing the core storage area into compartments 318-322. Thus, core storage area 130 may be divided into a plurality of smaller adjustable-sized compartments, or one or more inserts may be removed to define a large compartment.

Other inserts, which may or may not attach to the attachment means, could include lattice inserts 317 (such as preformed polyethylene lattice inserts) for holding a plurality of water bottles 319A-319C, as shown

in Figure 3, a canvas bag with a cordlace and cordlock for opening and closure, to hold items such as pucks or balls. Preferably, the inserts are easily removable. Preferably the lattice insert includes a bottom to hold water bottles when the insert is removed, and a handle (not shown) or means for attaching a handle to facilitate carrying when removed.

Additionally, a removable panel 146, as shown in Figures 1 and 4) comprised of rigid cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, is provided for insertion into a compartment (i.e., envelope) 408 beneath the core storage area 318-322, to provide a removable rigid bottom for the core storage area. The panel may be securely attached to the bottom in the compartment 408 such as with snug placement in the compartment, or with hook and loop fasteners or by other mechanical securing devices. Thus, the bag can be converted to a rigid bottom device or a flexible (i.e., foldable and collapsible) bottom device.

In one embodiment, the panel 146 may be longer than the compartment, such that when the panel is inserted into the compartment, a portion of the panel extends outward past the compartment. A pair of luggage wheels (not shown) may be attached to the outward extending portion of the panel 146. A user may then pull the bag along using the wheels.

In a preferred embodiment, core storage area 318-322 is approximately nineteen to twenty-six inches long, by approximately one twelve to sixteen inches wide, by approximately ten to fifteen inches deep. However, the present invention is not limited to those sizes. Other core storage area sizes effective for storing equipment such as hockey skates, and or water bottles and/or similarly sized articles may be used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

Referring now to Figure 5, a business article storage area 310 is comprised of the front panel 118 of the bag, as shown in Figure 1, and a business article panel 520, as shown in Figure 5. The business article panel 520 preferably includes a plurality of pockets 502 and 506 with closures, elastic holders 508 for markers, pens, pointers and the like; card pockets 504 configured for holding credit cards, business cards, tickets, passes, licenses and the like; as well as a snap ring 510 for holding keys or other devices. The pockets 502 and 506 may include closures comprised of hook and loop fastening means such as Velcro® brand fasteners by Velcro Industries B.V. Other sizes, configurations and numbers of pockets and holders may be employed without departing from the scope of the present invention so long as the panel 520 provides means for securing a plurality of relatively business articles in an orderly manner.

The business storage area 170 is comprised of panels 145, 165, 119 and 129 as well as a bottom panel. The panels form a compartment 170, which may be used to store various business articles, such as a cell
5 phone, booklets, pens, markers, brochures, folders, videos and papers, in an orderly accessible manner. The panels may be comprised of a non-rigid fabric, flexible foam, or a rigid cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, with a thin thread material covering such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The panels may be attached to the bag by glue, stitching,
10 fasteners, or other attachment means. Preferably, the panels are sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may instead be used.

Referring now to Figure 5, the exterior of the bag is conceptually shown. A U-shaped zipper closure 525 extending across top surface 350
15 and preferably down sides 119 and 129 enables access to the business folder storage area. The zipper is opened and closed by appropriately sliding a zipper pull in a conventional manner. Upon opening the closure 525, panels 145, 119 and 129 fold down enabling access to articles stored in compartment 170 and may insert and remove articles. The opening is
20 sufficiently sized to allow visibility, access, insertion and removal of articles in compartment 170. Though the zipper closure is conceptually shown along panels 350, 129 and 119, it is understood that the zipper

may be located and configured differently without departing from the scope of the present invention so long as it enables access to the business storage area compartment 170. For example, the zipper may
5 open a large U-shaped flap on panel 145. Alternatively, without departing from the scope of the present invention,

The panel 520 may be comprised of a non-rigid fabric material (e.g., packcloth or ballistic nylon), foam or rigid cardboard or plastic (e.g., polyethylene) material (flat or corrugated) covered with a thin thread
10 material such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The pockets and holders are attached to the panel by glue, stitching, fasteners, or other attachment means. Preferably, the panel is sewn into place at the bottom, top and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may instead be used.

15 In a preferred embodiment, the business article storage area 310 is approximately twenty-one inches long, by approximately two inches wide, by approximately twelve to fourteen inches in height. However, the present invention is not limited to that size. Other storage area sizes effective for storing medical supplies and/or similarly sized articles may be
20 used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

Referring now to Figure 3 business folder area 312 and 314 is comprised of panels 520 and 311-316. The panels form a plurality of

compartments 312 and 314, which may be used to store various business articles, such as business folders (e.g., file folders and binders), videos and papers, in an orderly accessible manner. The panels may be comprised of a non-rigid fabric, flexible foam, or a rigid cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, with a thin thread material covering such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The panels may be attached to the bag by glue, stitching, fasteners, or other attachment means. Preferably, the panels are sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may instead be used.

In a preferred embodiment, the business folder storage area 312 and 314 is approximately twenty-one inches long by approximately three inches wide, by approximately twelve inches deep (measured from the bottom of the bag to the top of the business storage area). Compartment 312 is preferably approximately twelve inches long, by three inches wide by twelve inches deep. Compartment 314 is preferably approximately nine inches long, by three inches wide by twelve inches deep. However, the present invention is not limited to those sizes. Other storage area and compartment sizes effective for storing business articles such as folders, papers, videos, binders and clipboards and/or similarly sized articles may

be used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

Referring again to Figures 1 and 2, an outside lid pocket 126 is provided on the top of the bag. The exemplary pocket 126 is comprised of transparent 20-gauge double polished clear vinyl. It is suitable for storing and allowing easy access to and visibility of stored articles, such as notes, printed directions, and other relatively flat articles.

Preferably, the exterior panels are comprised of a durable, high-strength, flexible, water resistant material, such as 1680 denier *Ballistic Nylon* 24 x 20 basket weave, 1½ ounce polyurethane coating, commercially available from E.I. Du Pont de Nemours, Co. (Du Pont). The sides may also include foam padding material (not shown) to provide cushioning and structural support. The bottom may be comprised of a similar material.

Side compartments 316 and 318 may be used to store various clothing items, business articles, accessories or equipment, such as gloves, shirts, socks, pens, markers and papers in an orderly accessible manner. The panels comprising the side compartments may be comprised of a non-rigid fabric, flexible foam, or a rigid cardboard or plastic material, flat or corrugated, with a thin thread material covering such as 420 denier nylon packcloth. The panels may be attached to the

bag by glue, stitching, fasteners, or other attachment means. Preferably, the panels are sewn into place at the bottom and along the sides, though releasable attachment means such as hook and loop fasteners may
5 instead be used.

In a preferred embodiment, side compartments 316 and 328 are approximately nine inches long, by approximately three inches wide, by approximately twelve inches in height. However, the present invention is not limited to those sizes. Other storage area and compartment sizes
10 effective for storing clothing items, equipment and/or business articles may be used and are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

Referring again to Figure 3, pouches 136 and 206 for holding items such as water bottles are also provided on the exterior of the bag. The
15 pouches may include an elastic band for securely engaging a bottle. The pouches may be comprised of a nylon mesh material. The mesh material will not collect water (e.g., rain water) and provides visibility of contents.

Referring now to Figure 7, the bottom preferably (as an option) has four feet 702-708 or a pair of runners (not shown) suitably fastened
20 thereon to support the bag off the ground, thereby limiting contact with dirt and ground moisture. Such feet may have various shapes and sizes. The feet may preferably be made of a suitable durable rubber, plastic or

polymeric material such as polypropylene. Runners are elongate members which also may be comprised of a durable rubber, plastic or polymeric material such as polypropylene. However, the present invention is not limited in this regard, as other suitable shapes, arrangements, materials and numbers of elements may be used without departing from the scope of the present invention. Further, while they are preferred, feet and runners may be omitted without departing from the scope of the present invention.

The bottom of the bag also preferably includes a water resistant, easy-to-clean, durable material, such as reinforced vinyl, to provide a durable, strong, moisture-resistant surface. As coaches may likely place the bag on dirty wet surfaces, such material is preferred, though not essential.

The overall dimensions of the bag may be varied as desired. However, preferably the bag is sized to conveniently accommodate, at least, medical supplies, coaching boards, equipment and file folders. Additionally, the bag may be sized to fit in an overhead storage bin and meet governmental and carrier (e.g., airline, rail and/or bus) carry-on baggage restrictions.

Additionally, an embodiment of the bag may include additional exterior releasable connection means for releasably attaching articles to

the bag. The connection means may be comprised of snap hooks, buckles, D-rings, straps, hook and loop fasteners and the like. For example, a snap hook may allow releasable attachment to a water bottle carrier, a ball bag, a mask, a helmet or the like. The releasable connection means may be placed at various locations on the bag (except the bottom). Furthermore, a plurality of releasable connection means may be provided.

Optionally, the bag may include permanent or removable wheels and a retractable handle as known in the art to facilitate transportation. The bag may further include various accessories and enhancements such as a key chain clip, e.g., a thumb-operated spring clasp; a plurality of auxiliary pockets, elastic holding straps and pouches on the interior and exterior panels; identification tags or windows and locking mechanisms.

While the invention has been described in terms of its preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modifications within the spirit and scope of the foregoing detailed description. The present invention may include other aspects not specifically delineated in the aforementioned preferred embodiments. The above in no way is intended to limit the scope of the invention. Such alternative embodiments and implementations are intended to come within the scope of the present invention.

